

Name: Carey Jaffee

Regarding: House Bill 5037 AAC

Presentation provided on February 24th 2022, at a legislature committee meeting regarding State funding for non-profit social service agencies

My name is Carey Jaffee. I work at an agency called ARI of CT as Clinical Manager. ARI of CT services adults with developmental disabilities with recreational, residential, and vocational services. I have been at ARI for 30 years and in the field for 40 years. I have two Masters Degrees one in Social Work and another in Special Education as well as additional training in Applied Behavior Analysis.

I will recount from my own personal experience why I believe the need for additional funding to private providers is long overdue. I would ask you to magnify the same issues and concerns that I am raising as they apply to so many others.

I presently have an annual salary that is some \$35,000-\$40,000 less than someone, with equal experience, responsibilities and education, working in the public sector such as with the Department of Developmental Services. I received one raise of 1% back in 2011 and recently a 3% raise this past year. Those have been the only increases in my base salary since 2009 or 13 years ago. My agency stopped contributing to my pension over 10 years ago due to the financial situation. At the same time, the inflation rate since 2009 has raised the cost of living by about 25% over those 13 years. My real wages, therefore, over the past 13 years reflects an actual loss of real income by about 20%. This at the same time as my caseload and responsibilities have increased.

Magnify that issue to all working with private providers across all spectrums of work responsibility being underpaid. Magnify that with challenges that providers are asked to work with that often include individuals with very significant behavioral issues and physical disabilities. Issues that can include serious aggression, self-abuse, and psychotic behavior. At my agency, 60% of the people we serve within our residential services are prescribed psychotropic medications and have significant psychiatric diagnoses. Yet, our direct care staff have wages even with recent increases that are only marginally higher than entry-level position such as in supermarkets or fast food outlets. Most direct care staff must work at two jobs to make a livable income.

The issue goes beyond wages. Lack of increases in administrative and general rates for over 15 years has had a devastating effect on agencies like mine in their ability to provide services to the people we serve.

So do you wonder why there are staff shortages? Do you wonder why there continues to be a high number of cases of allegations of abuse and neglect? Do you wonder why so many issues seem to be recycled year after year?

To those listening...would you accept this? I am asking would you accept this?